

Our Bible reading for today – **1 Samuel 7:1-17**

## “Ebenezer”

Some time ago I was going through boxes of my wife’s stuff. I’ve been giving a lot of things to my kids, figuring that is a good thing to do. I enjoy seeing them enjoy getting a memory of Mom. Most of the stuff has a lot of precious memories for me. That time I found a rock – a plain worthless rock. I wondered, “*Did Bobby put this here?*” “*Did Bobby give Gramma a rock, and because it was from Bobby she kept it?*” (Bobby is a grandson who is “nuts” about rocks.) I looked at it again and saw a word written on a flat side of the rock – “*Ebenezer*”. Then I remembered.

It’s good for us to remember. Memory is a wonderful gift. It can be faulty – especially as we age. They say you know that you’re old when you bend over to tie your shoes. After you get one tied you wonder, “*Wasn’t there something else I was going to do while I’m down here?*”

I love a story in 1 Samuel – Israel had a great victory over the Philistines. The Philistines had been a perpetual thorn in their side – raids, stealing, killing, plundering, assaulting. But God miraculously gave Israel a great victory over their arch-enemy. “***Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far has the LORD helped us.”*** (<sup>NIV</sup> 1 Samuel 7:12) Ebenezer isn’t just Scrooge’s first name, as in Dickens’s classic “*A Christmas Carol*”. Translated from Hebrew it means “*stone of help*”. The old hymn, “*Come Thou Fount*” mentioned Ebenezer in its 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza. Some contemporary Christian music publishers decided we were too dumb to learn the Bible story and what it meant, so took the words out. I prefer to leave it in. It reminds us that the God who helped us in the past is the same and can do it again.

But, back to that rock I found. When we learned that Nancy was pregnant with our last child, we were very upset because of Nancy’s health – an alarming heart problem which put her to bed for 2-3 months during her last pregnancy. We did not consider abortion because of our convictions and faith. To encourage herself of God’s presence and strength, and His ability to carry her through this, she put that little stone on her dresser as a constant reminder, “***Thus far has the LORD helped us.***” (She had a problem-free pregnancy, and God gave us a great son!)

We need reminders in our lives. Whether it’s a plain rock on your dresser with the word “*Ebenezer*” on it, or something else. That’s what the ordinances are about. Baptism is a symbolic picture of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection for us. The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic reminder of His sufferings in His body (the bread), and of His blood which was shed for our forgiveness (the cup). Jesus said, “***Do this in remembrance of me.***”

It’s good to be reminded of what Jesus did a long time ago. It’s good to be reminded of what He did in your life when He saved you. But what is He doing now? Remember. And celebrate.